

The Shire Done Wright

An Honors Thesis (HONR 499)

by

Alyssa Babb

Thesis Advisor

Robert Benson

Ball State University

Muncie, Indiana

February 2018

Expected Date of Graduation

May 2018

ABSTRACT

This project explores a design scenario in which Frank Lloyd Wright was born a hobbit. Where his architectural career took off during the reconstructing of the Shire, a post war rebuilding explored at the end of J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Return of the King*. The hobbit culture and history as described in Tolkien's novels, as well as particular descriptions of place, inform the designs created in this project. Wright's constructed works, drawings, and models all inform this project as well, explored through second hand description, detailed image study, and personal experiential observation. This project encompasses the design of three sites and the architectural structures thereon, presented through design models, and detail drawings. These sites are: New Row (A.K.A. Bagshot Row), The Green Dragon, and The Mathom House.

SpColl
Undergrad
Thesis
LD
2489
.Z4
2018
.B32

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Rob Benson for advising me over the course of this project, and for being as excited by it as I was. I would never have had the courage to tackle this project without him.

I would like to thank my parents. My mother for reading us The Lord of the Rings, and correcting my father on his readings when he tried to help, her memory continues to inspire me. My father for taking me to Falling Water, and encouraging me to make my college years my own. Thank you for everything.



PROCESS ANALYSIS

I was first inspired to do an honors thesis relating the designs of Frank Lloyd Wright and the literary world of JRR Tolkien during my junior year because of a curious intersection of my personal life and my studies; but the forces of my life have been priming me for such an apotheosis since before I was even born. I have an especially close tie to Tolkien through my family, and a less obvious connection to architecture through one of my mother's great great grandfathers.

My family is very important to me, and I have been steeped in the stories of their history my entire life. My maternal grandfather was an English teacher. He taught *The Hobbit* every year as part of his class. My mother told me that the family reread *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* nearly every year because of their incorporation in my grandfather's classes. By the time my parents read the novels to me as a young child my mother had them nearly word perfect and would correct my father from across the room if he misread things. My uncle did a series of watercolor paintings of various locations in Middle Earth, my aunt learned to speak Tolkien's elvish tongue, and I myself did a series of oil paintings in high school as gifts for my mother and aunts inspired by Tolkien's poems and songs. My family even uses poetic passages from *The Lord of the Rings* at funerals.

The house I grew up in had been in my family for five generations, and was actually designed by an ancestor of mine who was an architect and used the downstairs of the home as a showcase with different woodwork details and styles in each room. This family connection is what first made me think about architecture as a profession. But I had many other ideas of what I might want to do with my life. What really

inspired me to seriously pursue architecture was looking at pictures of Frank Lloyd Wright's Fallingwater. The way the house was nestled into the hillside and perched out over the water course looked so right, somehow the sensitive placement and neutral colors transformed the clean geometry of the house into an organic delight. I had never seen so masterfully artistic a piece, which could also serve a functional purpose, truly enriching someone's life. I knew that I wanted to do that. When I got to university I discovered that the elements of Falling Water that had so inspired me were actually elements of landscape architecture more than of architecture, and I have been studying landscape architecture ever since.

In my landscape architecture studies, I was assigned a project that required exploring Frank Lloyd Wright's works, as it was a landscape for one of the homes he designed in Chicago. I happened to be rereading *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy at the time of this assignment, and in the middle of a lecture about Wright's residential designs it all clicked. The distinctive wide round arched doorway on Wright's Heurtley House looked just like a Hobbit door. What if Wright had designed for hobbits? I was so pleased with my mashed up concept that I doodled low flat hobbit homes in the margins of my notes for the rest of the lecture on Wright. By the end of the hour I was convinced that the concept was viable and enchanting. I knew what I wanted my honor's thesis to be. I was closely tied to the works of both original creators, and the project would be challenging, helping me to grow as a designer by enabling me to engage both my personal and academic backgrounds as inspirations.

My process for creating this honors thesis was long, taking about two years. I began by reading and reflecting on Tolkien's *Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, extracting details of Hobbit lifestyle and surroundings and eventually selecting three sites to suit my design scenario. After this I explored literature and images of designs by Frank Lloyd Wright and cross-referenced these designs with the Hobbit sites I felt they could inform and inspire. This research phase of the project took most of a semester to complete.

3 The Shire Done Wright

The next phase in my process was to explore how to scale down elements from Wright's designs in a way that would adjust to the Hobbit stature. I spoke with architects and researched historic ideals on how to suit architecture to human proportions. Then I researched hobbit proportions drawing from Tolkien's writings and from the research of other fans found on the internet, this posed a particular challenge because I was determined to use Tolkien's proportions not those used in the films of *The Lord of the Rings* directed by Peter Jackson. Once satisfied with my collection of hobbit body data, I set out to establish the standards of hobbit architecture, roughly equivalent to those standards developed by architects for standard human design and construction.

Following this I began the design process in earnest. I began by developing floorplans akin to those used by Wright but with room layouts suitable to the needs of hobbits as defined by my understanding of hobbit culture. These evolved slowly to include construction, façade, and roof details for the structures which I would be modelling. I also created landscapes for each of the designs which involved developing topographic plans, planting plans, and circulation routes for each of the designs; all of which needed to be consistent with the landscape described by Tolkien in his novels. Placement of the structures within landscape context had to be delicately achieved to emulate the sensitivity to natural context Wright displayed in his works. This process of model design involved creation of digital files in the drafting software AutoCAD, refinement of same, and later adaptation of these digital plans into cut files for use in laser cutting the pieces used when assembling the models. The laser cut components were then rendered and assembled by hand, and supplemented with model vegetation itself created and applied by hand. Photographs of these models can be seen in this report as can the digital plans which are found in the appendices.

I then chose to create details of design elements which would be seen in the architecture of the buildings I designed. These included window details, door details, archway details, and skylight details. These design details draw heavily on Wright's designs but have been adapted to the forms and needs of

hobbits. These details were drafted by computer software, laser etched into chipboard, and rendered with colored pencil.

Lastly description of the project results composed and compiled to create this report. This process allowed me to hone and expand my academic skills in literary analysis and research, design style research, draftsmanship, design analysis, concept development, technical rendering, and model construction, all of which will be necessary in my future career as a landscape designer. I learned that I greatly enjoy the model making process, and the crafted clarity of digitally drafting construction and design details. My personal connections to Tolkien and Wright's works were strengthened over this experience. I was challenged while adopting Wright's design style to walk the line of emulation without falling into imitation. I believe that this project has important things to showcase about how people and setting influence architecture. I would like this project to be an example of very serious fan art, and to challenge the stigma of triviality that fan art often faces.

DESIGN SCENARIO

JRR Tolkien's Middle Earth, or more specifically the Shire is the primary matrix of the theoretical setting for my designs. The designs which follow represent the reconstruction of the Shire after the Scouring of the Shire which is described at the end of *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King*. The Scouring of the Shire the result of Saruman, operating as Sharkey's occupation of the Shire. Using a Lotho Sackville Baggins as a puppet, Saruman attempts to destroy the Hobbit way of life and the environment of the Shire, to exact revenge upon the four Hobbits in the Fellowship for their part in his fall from power. Saruman says to Frodo "I have already done much that you will find it hard to mend or undo in your lives. And it will be pleasant to think of that and set it against my injuries (The Return of the King 298)." Under normal circumstances he might have been right in expecting it to take many decades to repair the Shire, but the gift of Galadriel to Sam Gamgee of a box of elven soil from Loth-Lorien saved the Shire, causing replanted trees to grow impossibly fast and the fields' fertility to be restored and even improved (The Return of the King 302). The Hobbits banded together and repaired all the structures that were destroyed in a year; 1420, which lives in Hobbit memories as being an exceptionally good year on all fronts (The Return of the King 303).

Frank Lloyd Wright enters here, in the rebuilding process. I see him as young Hobbit architect who was influenced by the Traveler's descriptions of the other parts of Middle Earth they had seen and choses to bring a little of that style to the repair designs for the sites Sharkey's men had destroyed. This appearance of architecture influenced by a number of other cultures, is a parallel to Wright's influence by travels to Europe and Japan and his role in influencing the earliest forms of the International Style. Some of Wright's designs and the ones created here in Tolkien's world are influenced by the ravages of war; Wright having lived through both World Wars and the Hobbits' world having just been devastated by the War of the Ring.

HOBBIT ARCHITECTURAL STANDARDS

Hobbits, as most people know, are considerably shorter than most of the races of middle earth, being half the size of many men or elves and over a head shorter even than dwarves. They see other races as 'Big Folk' and do not naturally interact with artifacts and spaces sized for the 'Big Folk' comfortably. Designing a different set of standards for Hobbits ensured spaces were truly Hobbit sized. This involved more than halving the standards used in human architectural design, as the hobbits' proportions differ from humans'.

STANDARD HOBBIT MEASUREMENTS

High Ceilings: 84"

Standard Ceiling: 72"

Doorway Heights: 60"

Window Tops: 60"

Tallest Hobbits Ever: 54"

Tall Hobbits: 48"

Average Hobbits: 42"

Window Sills: 30"

High Counters: 27"

Door Knobs: 25"

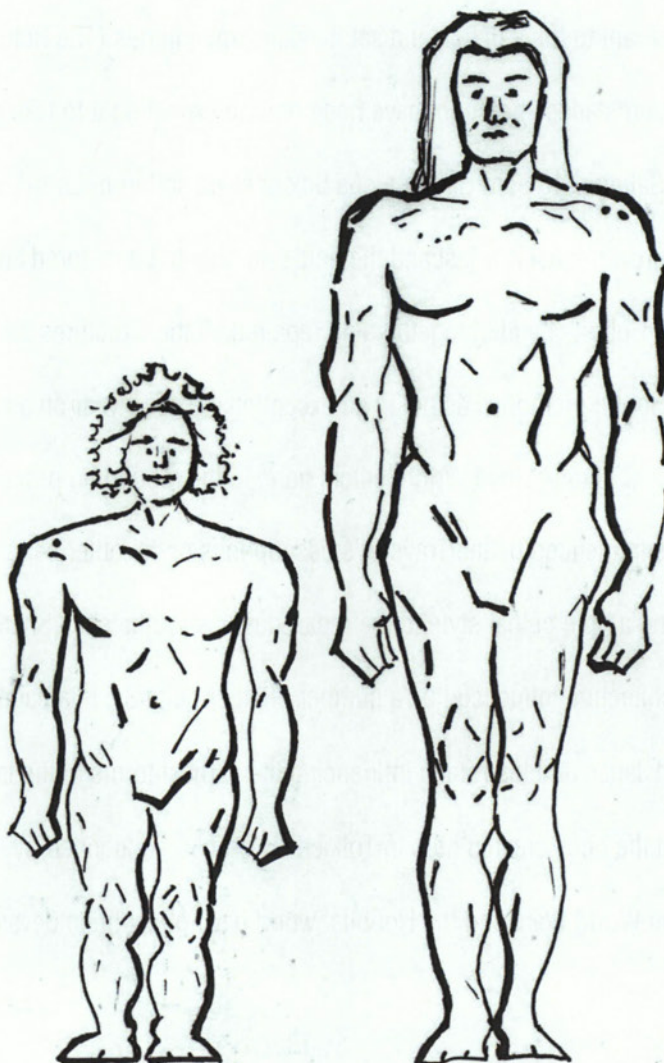
Short/Young Hobbits: 24"

Counters: 22"

Table Tops: 17"

Chairs: 10"

Stools: 8"



BAGSHOT ROW OR NEW ROW



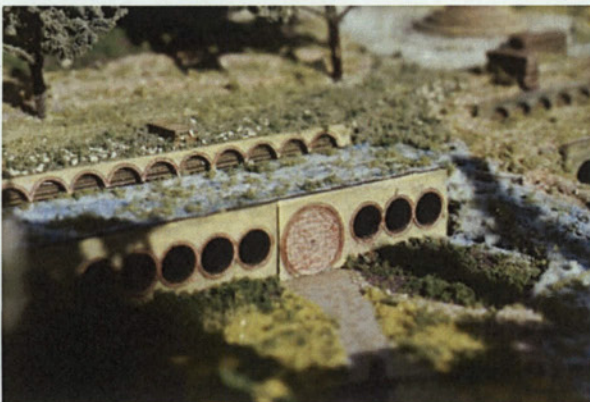
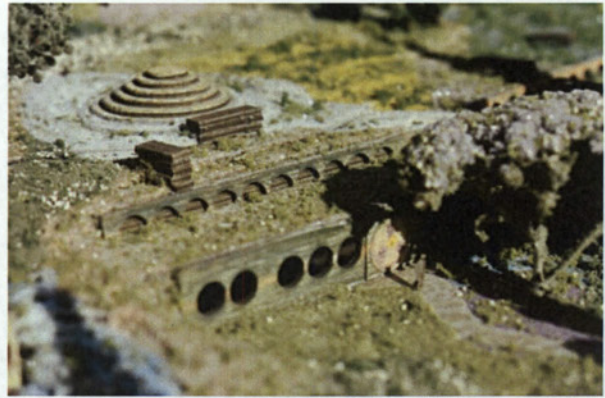
FEATURES FROM TOLKIEN'S NOVELS

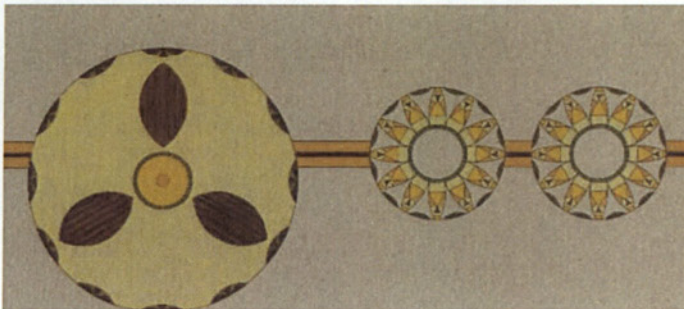
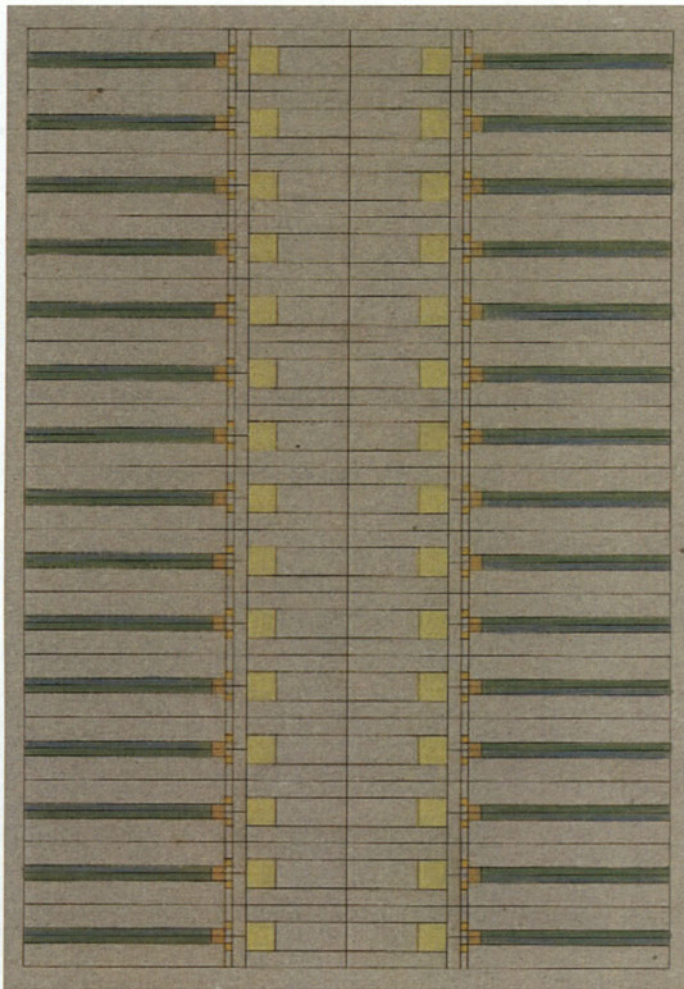
- Sam Gamgee's 'Old Gaffer' lives in Bagshot Row prior to the Scouring of the Shire, and is restored to New Row, pictured above, thereafter.
- Originally built at the same time as Bagend using much of the dirt excavated for Bagend in construction.
- Faces out onto the Party Field, which was torn up and converted to sand pits by Sharkey, but left later restored, see bottom left.



SITE PROGRAM

- Five houses, pictured here, each home to a families of hobbits, of various sizes.
- Supplies each of the houses with abundant garden space as in the second right image.
- Some houses, like that in the top photo, are also supplied with winter greenhouse atria for growing plants.
- Large kitchens and deep pantries embedded in the hill for constant temperature needed for the hobbits' truest joy—eating.





FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT PRECEDENTS

Bagshot Row is a collection of homes, with a unique identity, but each richer for its neighbors; and is influenced by Wright's own residential work, especially from Oak Park and the Usonian designs.

- Number One reflects Frank Lloyd Wright's home studio in Oak Park. The atrium, upper left, emulates the famous tulip windows.
- The coloration of Number Two is influenced by Falling Water.
- Home of Sam Gamgee's famous Gaffer, Number Three pictured center left, contains details drawn from the Charles Roberts House.
- The Heurtley House main entrance inspired the windows of Number Four, lower left. With similar border designs, and leading patterns which echo the scrolling of the gate.
- The color palette of Number Five originates in Wright's West coast designs,

RETROSPECTIVE

Looking back over the development of these designs I feel that the design of New Row has the most Tolkien, and the least Wright of my three sites. The location is fairly central to the novels and as such there were copious details to draw upon from *The Lord of the Rings* when creating my own designs. The model for New Row is without question the crowd favorite, many people have stopped by my desk to comment on it. It is the most topographically complicated of the designs I create and because it features five structures rather than just one there had to be a lot of detail work on the model to create visual separation between the ownership of the structures without eliminating the synergistic quality of the set or its sense of unity.

I believe that many of the details based on Wright's architectural ideas were successful, particularly the round and colorful adaptations of Wright's intricate window details which I adapted in designs for both windows and doors. The use of light shelves for lighting deeper rooms, and the solar alignment of the earth sheltered hobbit holes are the elements of these houses most in keeping with Wright's work. I learned a great deal in doing this design piece about the complexities of trying to design an exterior for a structure with only one visible façade. However, I believe this was the least successful of the projects at really expressing Wright's architectural language of form; in large part because of the number of canonic elements I was trying to incorporate from Tolkien's novels and in part because trying to capture the qualities of five different structures is a difficult task to accomplish on one model.

THE GREEN DRAGON INN



FEATURES FROM TOLKIEN'S NOVELS

- Favorite inn of Sam Gamgee, popular with residents of Bywater and Hobbiton.
- The Green Dragon is the northernmost building in Bywater and is thus closest to Hobbiton being just a mile down Bywater Road, seen in the lower left image, from the bridge which crosses the Water leading to Hobbiton.
- Windows and other elements of the inn were broken when the inns were closed by Sharky's men.

SITE PROGRAM

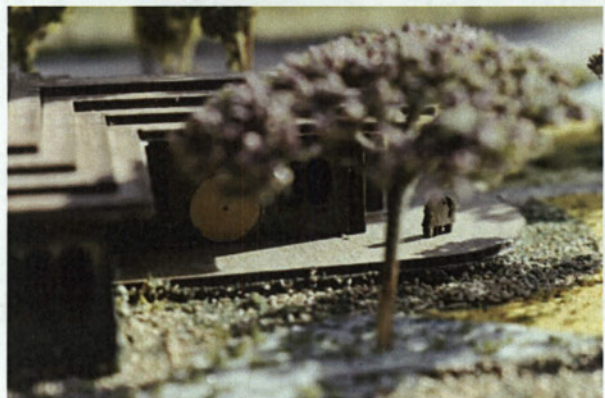
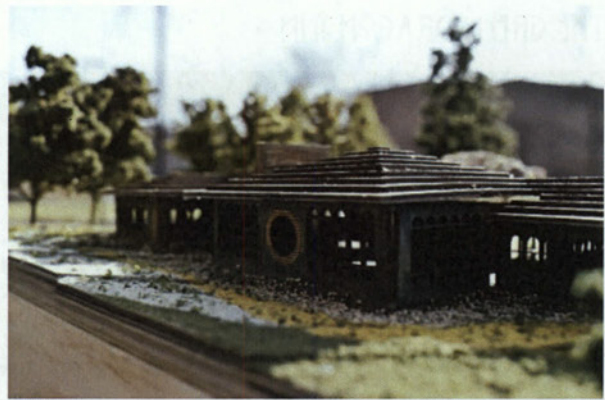
- Sells notably excellent provender and droughts.
- Provides comfortable rooms for travelers, both Hobbits and Big Folk.
- Serves as a meeting place for the exchange of gossip, news, and tales.

FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT PRECEDENTS

The structure of the Green Dragon Inn is modelled after Wright's home and workshop in Wisconsin.

Taliesin East is designed to provide living and work spaces for many people, which justifies adapting the design to an inn.

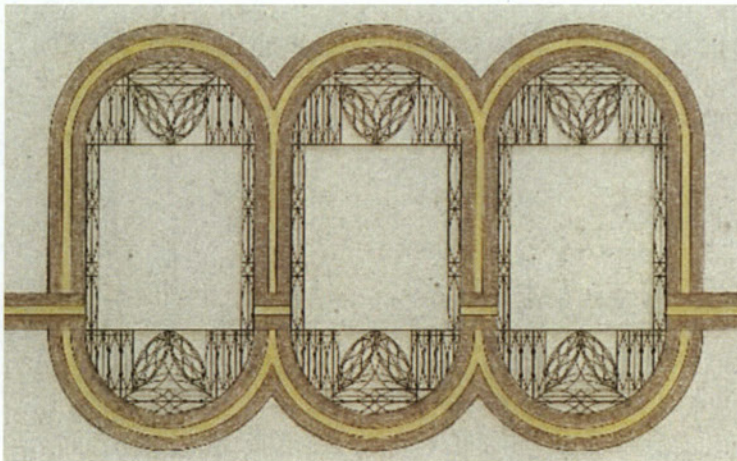
- Wrapping building around courtyard, lower right.
- Use of terraces, and fireplaces, middle images.
- Layout of interior rooms.
- Use of stacked flagstone, lower left.



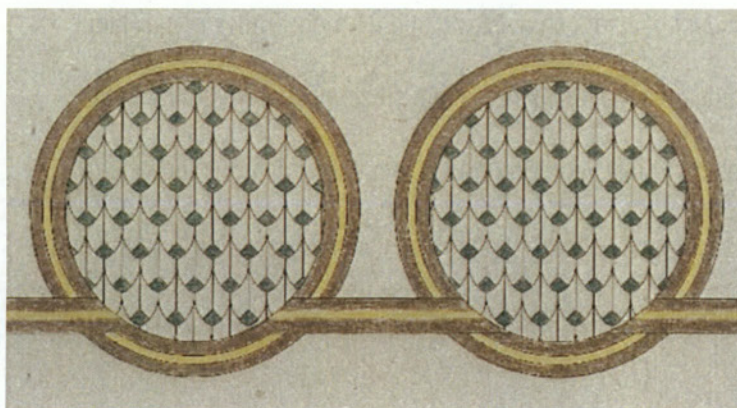


Another Wright design, the Winslow

House in River Forest, Illinois supplies inspiration for the detailing in the Green Dragon.



- Column design of the inglenook used a new color palette to become the entrance columns pictured above to common room.



- Pictured center, window designs from the dining room were used for public spaces.

- Pictured lower left, window design from the living room also utilized different colors to adapt them for use in private spaces.



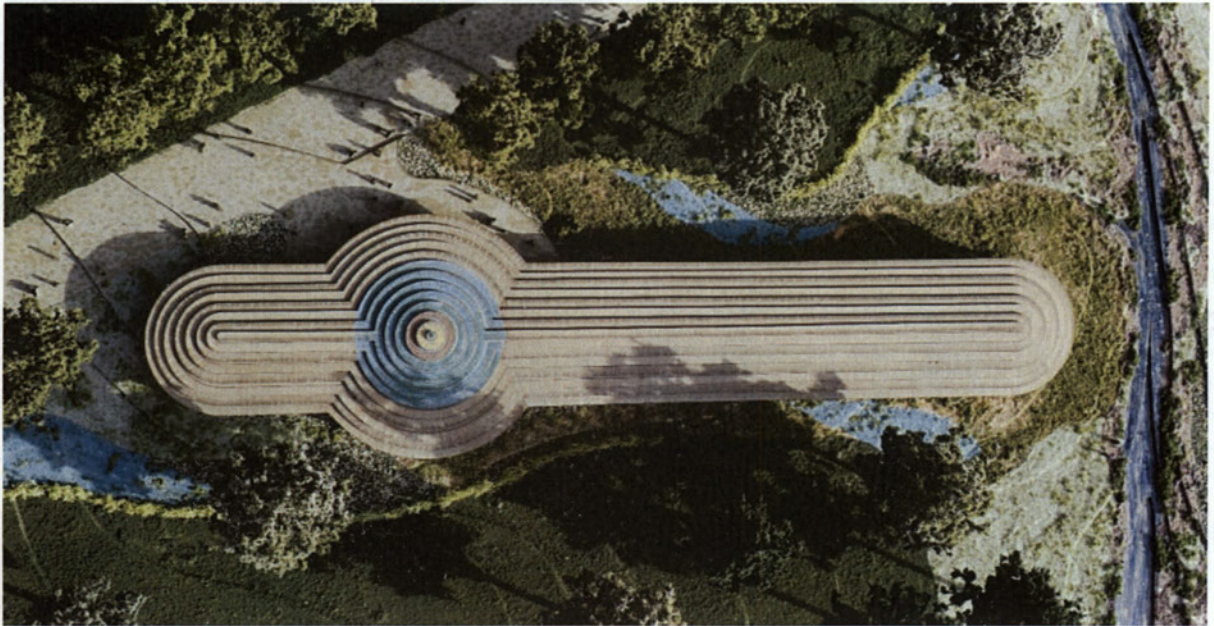
ADDITIONAL FEATURES

- As seen above the 'green dragon' is used as a stained glass window in the main hall of the inn. The central window design is by Pam Hansen at A Glass Menagerie in Savannah, GA.

RETROSPECTIVE

This is my personal favorite of the three crossover designs in this project, because it is the most truly blended design. The form language from Taliesin remains clear to anyone familiar with that compound, and yet the end design feels right for The Green Dragon. I believe the unity of this piece is in large part because of the landscape. As mentioned in the introduction, Wright had a great sensitivity to the context of his buildings. Tolkien was also inspired by the countryside he enjoyed walking through. Taliesin and Rural England are both bucolic landscapes and I judge this parallel lends a real sincerity and credibility to the blending of Wright's design and Tolkien's setting. The Green Dragon is the most fan famous location from *The Lord of the Rings* that I chose to use for this project and as such this is the most relatable, and therefore successful, of the three designs to demonstrate my concept when addressing the more literary-minded half of my intended audience.

MATHOM HOUSE



FEATURES FROM TOLKIEN'S NOVELS

- In Michel Delving, the unofficial capitol city of the Shire.
- The Mithril Coat is lent to the Mathom House by Bilbo in the interval between his return from the Lonely Mountain and his infamous birthday departure for Rivendell.
- Michel Delving is unusual in that it has many above ground buildings, see images, though most are built of wood, stone, or brick materials common in all Hobbit construction.

SITE PROGRAM

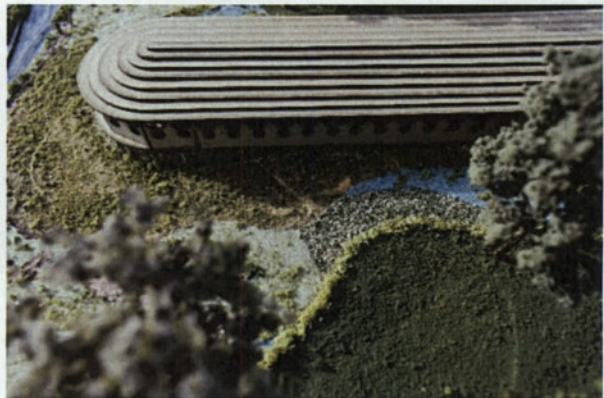
- Houses objects of interest but not of use to the hobbits
- Displays these objects for the public
- Preserves the history of the Shire

POTENTIAL EXHIBITED ITEMS

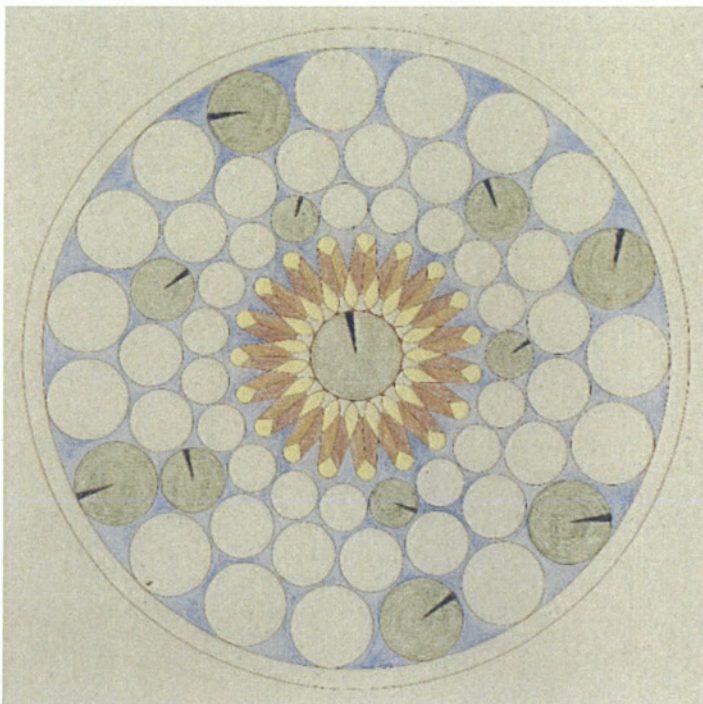
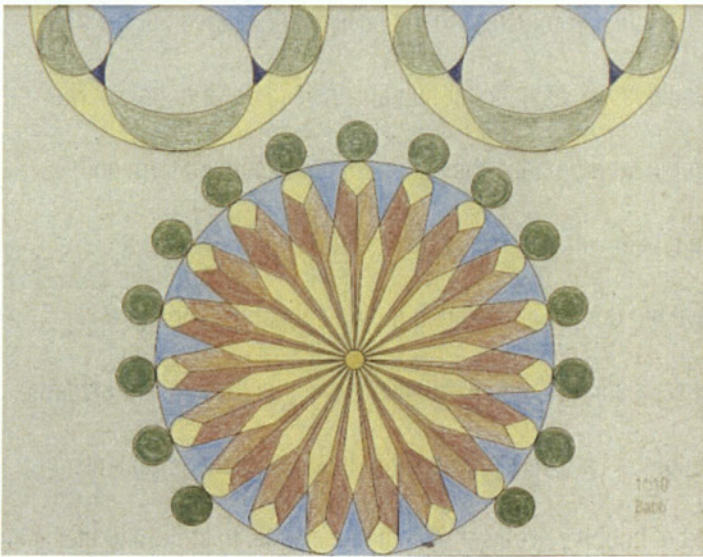
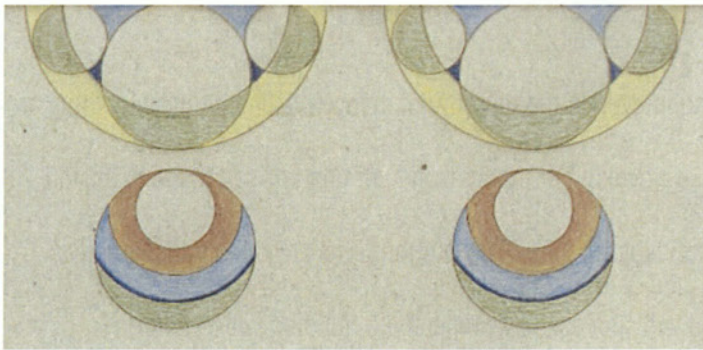
- Bilbo and Frodo's mithril coat
- Merry's uniform as Esquire of Rohan
- Pippin's Uniform as Guard of the Citadel
- Weapons of the Battle of Bywater
- Weapons of the Battle for the Greensward
- Saddle of the Bullroarer
- The Old Took's pipe collection
- Lobelia Sackville Baggins' infamous spoon "collection"

FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT PRECEDENTS

The Mathom House design uses Wright's design for the Marin County Civic Center as a strong precedent, drawing its general form therefrom. The functions of the Mathom House and the Marin County Civic Center, while not identical, are not dissimilar.



17 The Shire Done Wright



- Window details, pictured upper left, on the Mathom House are inspired by the pattern of the railing design of the Marin County Civic Center though the colors are invented.
- The decorative framing around the main doorway, center left, is influenced by the eave design of the Marin County Civic Center.
- Pictured lower left, design of the domed roof and some spatial sequencing are drawn from the Guggenheim Museum, an early model of the Guggenheim ceiling shares the design of rings of circles, the lily pad motif is original to this design.

RETROSPECTIVE

The Mathom House is an obscure location even in the memory of many Tolkien enthusiasts, there are only a handful of mentions of it in all of Tolkien's novels. For that reason I am unsurprised that this design has more Wright inspired elements than Tolkien inspired ones. The Wright forms are quite transparently recognizable. I made careful selections which have successfully presented a building which could accomplish the programming of the Mathom House, but if you increased the scale and changed out the doors to be something other than round this design could fairly easily be for humans instead of for hobbits. The other two designs in this project were successful in incorporating the culture of hobbits in the form and details of the structure, but this design seems a bit flat with regard to hobbit culture. However, as the Mathom House is a place for things hobbits have but don't really need in their personal lives, but are important in their culture. Some of the cultural separation which dissatisfies me in this design can, perhaps, be laid at the feet of the programming of the building. I am very pleased with the botanical components included in this design as that is an integral part of hobbit self-description and essential to their rural lifestyle.

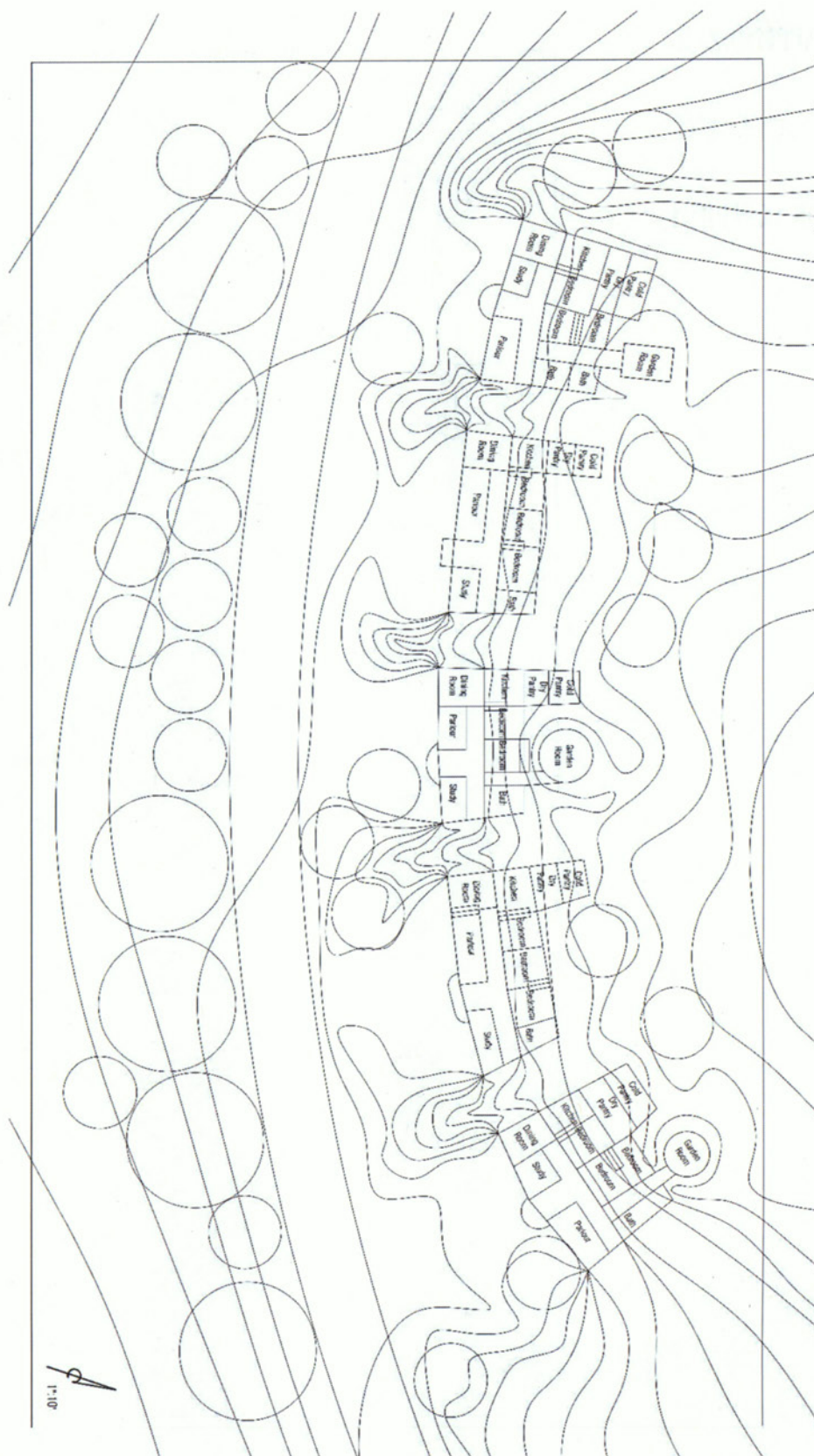
CONCLUSION

Landscape has an incredible power to influence what happens upon it. Landscapes—natural, constructed, symbolic, aesthetic—shape the lifestyles of the people who live thereupon: influencing the industries available to the local people as jobs, shaping the diet of the community, even determining the closeness of the community by limiting the ease people have to see one another, and providing the difficulties to maintaining an independent lifestyle without contact of neighbors. It is no surprise that the resources in and character of a landscape shape the architecture of entire regions. This is true whether the people on that landscape are human, or hobbit.

For this project the landscape I was exploring was one of fantasy, but its influences were real. The designs in this project I am most pleased with are those where the landscape, its people, and the architecture are at peace with one another; fitting together in such a way that no element is diminished. When I began this project I considered it rather tangential to my professional aspirations to become a landscape architect, a study of architectural design and a unique community of users—who I, and my family, have loved for a lifetime. But I have come to the realization that this project is anything but tangential to landscape architecture. The landscapes—environmental and cultural—which shaped Tolkien, Wright, and myself in our various works are fundamentally important to how we see our creative work come to life. In many ways landscape is the common, but subtly elusive element which connects Tolkien and Wright, and which has made the melding of their works such a magical process.

WORKS CITED

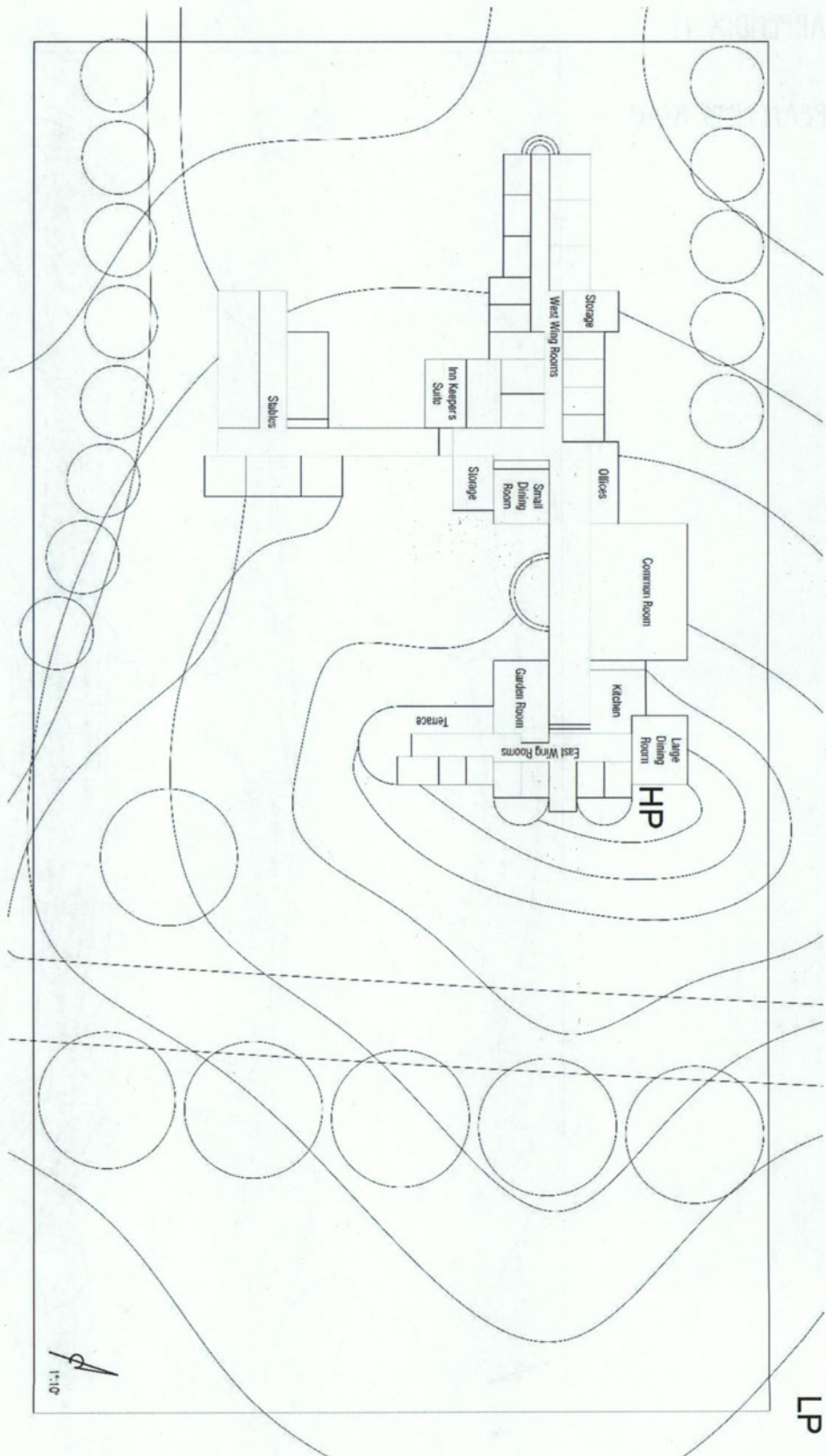
- Aguar, Charles E., and Berdeana Aguar. *Wrightscapes Frank Lloyd Wrights landscape designs*. McGraw-Hill, 2002.
- Cannon, Patrick F., et al. *Hometown architect the complete buildings of Frank Lloyd Wright in Oak Park and River Forest, Illinois*. Pomegranate, 2006.
- Dunham, Judith, and Scot Zimmerman. *Details of Frank Lloyd Wright: the California work, 1909-1974*. Thames and Hudson, 1994.
- Fell, Derek. *The gardens of Frank Lloyd Wright*. Frances Lincoln, 2014.
- Gebhard, David Stanley, and Scot Zimmerman. *Romanza: the California Architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright*. Thames and Hudson, 1989.
- Hess, Alan, et al. *Frank Lloyd Wright: the houses*. Rizzoli, 2006.
- Legler, Dixie, and Christian Korab. *Prairie Style*. Stewart, Tabori & Chang, 1999.
- Lind, Carla. *The Wright style: the interiors of Frank Lloyd Wright*. Thames and Hudson, 1992.
- Nordland, Gerald, and Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer. *Frank Lloyd Wright in the realm of ideas: LTV Center Pavilion, Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas, Texas ; January - March 1988 ...* Southern Illinois Univ. Pr., 1988.
- Smith, Kathryn, and Judith Bromley. *Frank Lloyd Wrights Taliesin and Taliesin West*. Abrams, 1997.
- Tolkien Gateway contributors. "Tolkien Gateway." *Tolkien Gateway*. Tolkien Gateway, 4 Sep. 2016. Web. 27 Jan. 2017.
- Tolkien, J. R. R. *The Fellowship of the Ring: Being the First Part of The Lord of the Rings*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1986. Print
- Tolkien, J. R. R. *The Hobbit*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965. Print
- Tolkien, J. R. R. *The Return of the King: Being the Third Part of The Lord of the Rings*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1986. Print
- Tolkien, J. R. R. *The Two Towers: Being the Second Part of The Lord of the Rings*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1986. Print



APPENDIX 2:

PLAN GREEN

DRAGON INN



APPENDIX 3:

PLAN MATHOM

HOUSE

